

Introduced by Senator Speier

(Principal coauthors: Senators Poochigian, Scott, and Simitian)

(Principal coauthors: Assembly Members Aghazarian, Frommer, and Liu)

January 19, 2005

Senate Joint Resolution No. 2— Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 2, as introduced, Speier. Armenian Genocide: Day of Remembrance.

This measure would designate April 24, 2005, as the “California Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923.” It would memorialize the Congress of the United States to act likewise to commemorate the Armenian Genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, The Armenian people, living in their 3,000 year
2 historic homeland in eastern Asia Minor and throughout the
3 Ottoman Empire, were subjected to severe persecution and brutal
4 injustice by the rulers of the Ottoman Empire before and after the
5 turn of the 20th century, including widespread massacres,
6 usurpation of land and property, and acts of wanton destruction
7 during the period from 1894 to 1896, and again in 1909; and
8 WHEREAS, The horrible experience of the Armenians at the
9 hands of their oppressors culminated in 1915 in what is known
10 by historians as the “First Genocide of the Twentieth Century,”
11 and as the prototype of modern-day mass killing; and
12 WHEREAS, The Armenian Genocide began with the arrest,
13 exile, and murder of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals, and

1 political, religious, and business leaders, starting on April 24,
2 1915; and

3 WHEREAS, The regime then in control of the empire, known
4 as the “Young Turks,” planned and executed the unspeakable
5 atrocities committed against the Armenian people from 1915
6 through 1923, which included the torture, starvation, and murder
7 of 1,500,000 Armenians, death marches into the Syrian desert,
8 the forced exile of more than 500,000 innocent people, and the
9 loss of the traditional Armenian homelands; and

10 WHEREAS, While there were some Turks and others who
11 jeopardized their safety in order to protect Armenians from the
12 crimes being perpetrated by the Young Turk regime, the
13 genocide of the Armenian people constituted one of the most
14 egregious violations of human rights in the history of the world;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, The United States Ambassador to the Ottoman
17 Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., stated “Whatever crimes the
18 most perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, and
19 whatever refinements of persecutions and injustice the most
20 debased imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortunes
21 of this devoted people. I am confident that the whole history of
22 the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The
23 great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost
24 insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian
25 race in 1915. The killing of the Armenian people was
26 accompanied by the systematic destruction of churches, schools,
27 libraries, treasures of art, and cultural monuments in an attempt
28 to eliminate all traces of a noble civilization with a history of
29 more than 3,000 years”; and

30 WHEREAS, Winston Churchill wrote: “As for Turkish
31 atrocities: ... massacring uncounted thousands of helpless
32 Armenians, men, women, and children together, whole districts
33 blotted out in one administrative holocaust—these were beyond
34 human redress”; and

35 WHEREAS, Contemporary newspapers like the New York
36 Times commonly carried headlines such as “Tales of Armenian
37 Horrors Confirmed,” “Million Armenians Killed or in Exile,”
38 and “Wholesale Massacre of Armenians by Turks”; and

39 WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army
40 commanders on the eve of World War II that the merciless

1 persecution and killing of Poles, Jews, and other peoples would
2 bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all, speaks today of
3 the annihilation of the Armenians”; and

4 WHEREAS, Unlike other peoples and governments that have
5 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
6 regimes, and despite the overwhelming weight of evidence, the
7 Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the
8 occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the
9 Young Turk rulers, and those denials compound the grief of the
10 few remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory
11 of the victims, and cause continuing trauma and pain to the
12 descendants of the victims; and

13 WHEREAS, Nations that have officially recognized the
14 Armenian Genocide have been subjected to retaliation and
15 condemnation by Turkey; and

16 WHEREAS, There have been concerted efforts to revise
17 history through the dissemination of propaganda suggesting that
18 Armenians were responsible for their fate in the period from
19 1915 through 1923 and by the funding of programs at American
20 educational institutions for the purpose of furthering the cause of
21 this revisionism; and

22 WHEREAS, Leaders of nations with strategic, commercial,
23 and cultural ties to the Republic of Turkey should be reminded of
24 their duty to encourage Turkish officials to desist from efforts to
25 distort facts and deny the history of events surrounding the
26 Armenian Genocide; and

27 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and
28 revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that
29 few survivors remain who serve as reminders of indescribable
30 brutality and torment, compel a sense of urgency in efforts to
31 solidify recognition and reaffirmation of historical truth; and

32 WHEREAS, By honoring the survivors and consistently
33 remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities
34 committed against the Armenian people as well as the
35 persecution of the Assyrian and Greek populations of the
36 Ottoman Empire, we guard against repetition of the crime of
37 genocide; and

38 WHEREAS, California has become home to the largest
39 population of Armenians in the United States, and those citizens
40 have enriched our state through leadership in the fields of

1 academia, medicine, business, agriculture, government, and the
2 arts and are proud and patriotic practitioners of American
3 citizenship; and

4 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront
5 in encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human
6 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to
7 prevent recurrence of the crime of genocide; now, therefore, be it

8 *Resolved by the Senate and Assembly of the State of*
9 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California
10 hereby designates April 24, 2005, as the “California Day of
11 Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and
12 be it further

13 *Resolved,* That the State of California commends its
14 conscientious educators who teach about human rights and
15 genocide; and be it further

16 *Resolved,* That the State of California respectfully
17 memorializes the Congress of the United States to act likewise to
18 commemorate the Armenian Genocide; and be it further

19 *Resolved,* That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
20 this resolution to the President of the United States, Members of
21 the United States Congress, and the Governor.